1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

[p.4]

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A naming ceremony—women sitting in front of the mother's hut. (Crowd includes Diana Cohen, wife of the author).

Horsemen saluting a chief in Magumeri.

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Everyone knows where the boundaries lie between village areas, or between hamlets and other settlements, and there is plenty of land for expansion and for the wandering cattle nomads who traverse the area annually moving their cattle north and south with the coming and going of the rains.

The settlements are all made up of walled compounds and within these are the mud-walled houses with conical thatched roofs, or sometimes grass mat walls with thatched roofs. In the northeast of Bornu the people specialize in a bee-hive shaped house of bound thatch which can be picked up and moved and can reach a size of twenty to thirty feet in diameter, although ten to fifteen feet is more common. A compound is almost always rectangular in shape with mud or grass mat walls and internal partitions. There is only one entrance which is often a house with two doors so that there is a shelter at the doorway for people to gather and visit with the household head. The compounds in any settlement are always arranged in a "U"-shape with the open end towards the west and the closed end on the east. The arms of the U then form the north and south sides of the open plaza where all the major events of town take place. Although in very tiny settlements, big cities, or settlements that have lost a great many people, this U-shape is not often easy to discover, it can be seen by simply asking people where they have their central plaza. When this is pointed out, the questioner knows exactly where to look for the house of the senior political leader of the settlement since his household is always at the bottom of the U in the center facing west. Parenthetically, this means that when individuals or groups pray and bow down toward the east in the open plaza, which they often do, they face the doorway of their local political leader's compound.

Around the villages are fields of millet, the major food staple, guinea corn, ground-nuts, the major cash crop, and numerous specialized crops of vegetables or gourds that vary from place to place depending upon local conditions. Almost everybody does a little farming while goods not produced within the household itself are purchased at local weekly markets that dot the countryside in each of the major villages.

In their culture the Kanuri share ideas about religion, social organization, and subsistence patterns with many of the other peoples of the Western Sudan. Even esoteric items such as pre-pubescent boys' hair styles are shared across wide areas of the southern and central Sahara ranging as far away as Morocco. In their patterns of dress—workshirts and long ground-length robes for men, long shirts and saris for women—they again share many items with surrounding peoples as they do in their love of horses which give a man prestige unless he is one of the few in the cities that owns an automobile. Their language, Kanuri, is not related to other languages of Nigeria, but is shared and closely related to a [illegible] group of tongues called Central Saharan that ranges from the Tibesti highlands in northern Chad to Bornu in the southwest and the Darfur region in the modern nation of Sudan, in the southeast. It is a graceful language in which the verb comes at the end of the sentence as in Latin and in which there are many polite circumlocutions for saying things diplomatically. Thus if I wish to say a man is untrustworthy I do not say it outright. Instead I say quietly that he has narrow eyes, which comes from the saying, "A man with narrow eyes has no shame," he lacks proper respect for his obligations to others. There are many greetings which are adjusted to social rank,

553 money, which helps to allay the expenses of the ceremony, is collected by a close friend of the father of the new child. When the face marks have been cut, and the uvula removed, the father sends a subordinate to tell the women inside the name he has chosen for his/child. When the subordinate returns the name is supposedly revealed to the seated men. However, the father or his friend, who has collected the money, usually tells the gathered men at the same time as the women are being told. It is at this time that the sex of the child is made public. The Koran reading being finished the head mallam leads the entire male assemblage in the fatiha (first verse of the Koran) and the ceremony is over. Kola nuts are passed around to all males, as well as perfume for dipping the fingers, and prayer beads. Each reader of the Koran receives a few pennies, in addition, as a token of gratitude from the new father. He must also give a small present of money to the barber and the head mallam as well as the leading woman who helped organize the activities inside the compound. Each of these may receive a couple of chickens or more if the father is wealthy and/or wishes to give the impression that he is a "big" man.

[231] A ram is killed and cooked during the day by the women of the compound, their relatives and friends. The skin is given to the head mallam. Some food is given to the poor, and at the father's instructions, other portions are sent to the houses of relatives, friends and high status persons. The naming ceremony is a day of keen pleasure for the namesake of the new child, if he or she is present, for it is a public recognition of the respect and affection with which they are regarded by the family.

231 Mala Bukar, the butcher

463 The butcher's craft, although comparatively lucrative, is a low status occupation. It requires technical skills and social re-

[874] lations beyond the tribe. Manual and anatomical knowledge of butchery is learned during the apprenticeship period, often referred to as "taking up the knife". The craft also requires continuous relations

[439] with cattle owners, who supply the raw material for the work. Since cows are primarily kept by Fulani and Shuwa nomads, this requires inter-tribal relations for the butcher with the cattle people. Sheep and goats are kept locally and sold generally by their keepers to one of the several local butchers.

592 Mala Bukar lives with his two wives, the younger of whom has a small child, aged about three, and two tada njima (sons of the house, in this case, apprentices). There are five huts in the compound, one each for the wives, one for himself, one for the two apprentices, and

592 one for meat storage. The apprentices are both sons of butchers un-
874 related but known to Mala Bukar. They explained that they wished to travel about the country before they settled down in their home towns as butchers. One seemed much surer of returning eventually to his

[831] father's household than the other. They treat Mala Bukar with as much respect as they would a real biological father, but seem to have a somewhat more open discussion with him of their sexual life than sons who live at home.

423 Mala Bukar has inherited some farmland with the kulo fatobe area (the near or house farm area). He also has a plot farther out in

241 the kulo karabe area (far or bush farm area). In addition, his apprentices are clearing (1956) a new plot in the bush farm area which is to replace a depleted one next year. The apprentices are also clearing

241 small plots of their own at the same time on which they hope to grow cash crops. In 1955, Mala Bukar obtained ten bags of millet and three of groundnuts. Cash value of this crop at prevailing prices is £20.0.0.

241 592 Mala Bukar does no actual farm work himself. His apprentices and wives (never working together at the same time and place, plant, hoe and harvest his crop. He does give some directions at the beginning of these operations and he decides on the planting and harvesting dates. The apprentices make the farm work of the wives less essential in this case than is usual. This gives these women a great deal more free time, especially in the wet season, than almost any other married women in town, with the exception of the head dyer's wives. This man also has several apprentices. Mala Bukar's wives spend their productive energies in cooking, bringing water for the household, and selling the hooves of slaughtered animals which their husband gives them as a source of private income for themselves.

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231 463 461 [443] Since Mala Bukar's work schedule is tied to the availability of animals for slaughter, it appears at first glance to have a random quality. Exceptions to this are his rigid adherence to Friday as a day of prayer, or at least, no slaughter, and Sunday which is the Magumeri market day. However, he may butcher a sheep or a goat on the spot on Sunday if the selling is brisk and animals are to be had. Trips to other markets in the vicinity are dependent upon his immediate stocks of meat, and upon what he hears about demand at other markets.

231 463 435 434 For six months of the year he deals only in sheep and goats (this is not true of butchers at larger centres, where many people can afford beef). One goat costs from 31/- to 40/- and he prepares and sells on the average four per week, at a profit of 2/- to 4/- each, i.e. an average profit of 3/- each or 12/- per week. Sheep cost him usually

231 463 435 434 from 20/- to 30/-, and he claimed that his return on a sheep was the same as that on a goat. Since he sells about two of these per week during the dry season, we can estimate his sheep profit at 6/- per week. Thus for the six months of the year when the nomads are not in the Magumeri vicinity, Mala Bukar gets a cash income from meat sales of approximately 18/- per week (£23.0.0.).

When selling the hides of these animals, he received 1/6d. to 2/- per goat hides and 2/- to 4/- for a sheep skin. Using the above figures and taking median prices, we can calculate an additional income of £12.0.0. for this period.

For the other six months, around the rainy season, when the cattle nomads come north, he kills very few sheep and goats, but butchers about four to six cows per week at a profit of 10/- to 12/- per cow. Taking median values this gives him an approximate income from this activity of £71.0.0. The hides from this work bring between 4/- and 7/6d. per skin and Mala Bukar felt that 5/6d. was the price he most often received. This gives an approximate income of £36.0.0. for cowhide per year. He also received about 1/- per week "commission" because of his role as head butcher, from the sale of hides belonging to other Magumeri butchers (i.e. £3.0.0. per year). This estimation of Mala Bukar's annual craft work puts its total value to him at about £167.0.0.

434 [452] However, he does not actually take in all this income as cash earnings. Many people take meat from him on credit, and others come round when he is killing an animal and beg some gratis. He complained of this loss and asked the writer repeatedly to take it into account when calculating annual sales and profits. He felt that if he could have in cash value the amount of meat he was not paid for, either

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231 of transportation besides walking. In the farm survey it was found that
511 of seventy-five household heads questioned, about one-half (forty-five per cent) owned horses and better than half (fifty-nine per cent) owned from one to three donkeys. Horses, besides being modes of conveyance, are prestige objects of value per se, and thus are purchased for this latter purpose as well as their utilitarian value. Thus a man who already owned a horse might trade it for a bigger, a faster, or a more beautiful one, i.e. for a number of non-economic as well as economic reasons.

342 There are four house types in general use in Bornu. Each one is progressively more durable than the other and more expensive. The diagrams on the next page illustrate these types of accommodation. Type "A" is usually replaced and rebuilt every three to four years, while types "B" and "C" may last up to ten years with only minor repairs. In larger towns and among the upper classes generally type "D", a mud-walled edifice with a domed mud roof braced on wooden arches is
[178] the predominant variety. Today, burnt brick and cement with corrugated iron roofing is slowly coming in as a desirable building material at the top echelons of society.

511 With the expansion of numbers in a household, the amount of
[356] huts must be increased and replacement costs and depreciation increase
[351] proportionately. Compound walls are a similar expense. Zana mat (grass) walls must be replaced every two to three years while mud walls, only need repairs and maintenance after each rainy season, or perhaps after every two if they have been well constructed.

342 Building is handled in two ways. A common method among the
476 lower strata is for the household head aided by neighbours, friends and
565 relatives to organize a serwa (co-operative work group). The women of

[text continues on p.300]